

Paul

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Hello everyone, my name is Noah Weekes, my pronouns are masculine, and today I am going to be talking about the historical figure of Paul in the New Testament in Second Temple Judaism. Paul in Second Temple Judaism is an interesting figure but who was Paul? Paul was a Pharisee which meant that he was an “exceptionally gifted scholar of the Jewish law and traditions” and that he was among a group of individuals that followed the Torah/law down to the most minute details. (Fredrikson, 635, 2017). He was also someone that believed in Jesus as the Messiah, God’s son. At first, Paul initially persecuted early believers in Jesus the Messiah but became a believer in the gospel after an unknown experience (Hogeterp, 587, 2020). Most importantly, Paul was a Jew. Paul never speaks of converting from being a Jew to anything else; he did not move from one religion to another, partially because there was nothing for him to move to. Christianity during his lifetime did not exist. Secondly, Paul held fast to Jewish traditions because he was a Jew.

So why is Paul important? Well, first we need to know what Judaizing is. Judaizing is the adoption of Jewish practices by non-Jews. Paul encouraged selective Judaizing, and he commanded his followers to relinquish belief in idols and believe only in the God of the Jews that being said he did not support the circumcision of non-Jews and said “Christ would be of no benefit to you” (Fredrikson 635). Paul is important to Jews because he came to them as a Jew, as one of them but one that believed in the Gospel. He was also important because he did not attempt to assimilate Gentiles into Jewish culture by forcing them to become circumcised or obey Jewish laws. Instead, he was fiercely against that and believed that “a Gentile did not need to become a Jew to be “saved” (Fredrikson, 635, 2017). Saved is a term used loosely because being saved was a concept not yet invented. Paul only expected them to give up their idols and become “God-fearing.”

Finally, Paul was a prolific New Testament writer having written up to 13 books with 7 being undisputed making him the author of the most books in the NT (Longnecker, 416, 2020).

Sources

- Fredrikson, Paula, “Paul and Judaism.” In *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, 633-637. Second Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
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